

Beneath the Hood

Secrets of Making Theatre

Act I Where it all Begins

Chip Rome

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The Metaphor: The Engine, an energy system

The Theatrical Engine:

1. The Material (where ideas and plays come from)
2. Theatre Makers (from the book to the look)
3. Imagination, mechanics and tricks of the trade (using play to make a play)
4. Who is driving? (what I really want to do is direct)
5. The destination - Opening Night and Beyond (there's no business like show business)

The Metaphor: The Engine, an energy system

Theatre is *Storytelling* and storytelling is an engine or energy system too:

- An inciting incident to start the story
- The expanse of the middle of the story (the struggle)
- The climax and resolution to the inciting incident

Theatre is *Story-Showing* and the engine is enhanced by its “body” & accessories

- A distinctive visual style
- An environment that sets a mood
- The addition of technical elements (lights, sounds, color choices, etc.)

Act One: The Material (Where Ideas Come From)

Publishers and Producers

- Company of Actors
- Venue
- Budget
- Local mores
- Commission, themes and season
- Recent productions
- Philosophy (new work, classics, social action, training talent, etc.)
- Rights availability

Act One: The Material (Where Ideas Come From)

Musicals versus Straight Plays

- Tams/MTI/R&H/TRW vs French (<https://www.samuelfrench.com/>)
- Dramatists (<https://www.dramatists.com/>)
- Playscripts.com (<https://www.playscripts.com/>)
- New Play Exchange (<https://newplayexchange.org/dashboard>)
- Royalties
- Restrictions (Neil Simon, Samuel Beckett, Touring Co.)

What kind of story do you want to tell? To whom? Why?

Info provided by publishers

Perusal versus rental/purchase

The Material (Where Ideas Come From)

A Mini Playwriting Lesson

- Dialogue as action
- Characters want something
- How do they try to get it? Tactics.
- Each line is a “To... “ verb
- Contrasting desires create conflict.
- This becomes the engine: the energy of one move causing another
- A character succeeds or fails to get what s/he wants= A BEAT
- Look at an example from *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams

The Beat: Beginning, middle and end (organic structure)

A Streetcar Named Desire (Scene Two)

[**Stanley:** Let's cut the re-bop!]

Stella: Stanley! You come out here and let Blanche finish dressing.

Blanche: I'm through dressing, honey.

Stella: Well, you come out then.

Stanley: Your sister and I are having a little talk.

Blanche: Honey, do me a favor. Run to the drug-store and get me a lemon-coke with plenty of chipped ice in it! Will you do that for me, Sweetie?

Stella: Yes.

The Six Line Exercise

1. Place: A small efficiency or apartment. It is hot and humid. Jot down a couple of notes about what you see.
2. A woman enters a small apartment or efficiency. She is uncertain, nervous, about thirty, overwhelmed. Jot down some notes of what she does.
3. A man enters. He is confident, strong, sweating from the heat but in good humor.
4. He sees the woman. They look at each other.
5. Write a short scene of six lines.

Five minutes.

The Material (Where Ideas Come From)

Improvisation

Another approach to finding material.

Always say “Yes... and...”

CROW:

Character

Relationship

Objective /Obstacle

Where/When are we?

How a Pro did it:

Tennessee William's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, end of scene one.

- Look at scene

The Material (Where Ideas Come From)

Questions

Reflections

Comments

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